



MADD

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**Transportation Committee Hearing
March 11, 2009**

SB No. 151

“An Act Concerning the Use of Ignition Interlock Devices in Motor Vehicles”

Good Afternoon. My name is Janice Heggie Margolis, and I am the Executive Director of Mothers Against Drunk Driving Connecticut. I wish to thank you for holding this hearing on SB 151; I appreciate the opportunity to testify before you Senator DeFronzo and Representative Guerrera and the Transportation Committee. I hope together we can pass sound legislation that will preclude injuries and deaths and preserve Connecticut lives.

I have come before this committee today to endorse interlock bill SB 151, An Act Concerning the Use of Ignition Interlock Devices in Motor Vehicles. Ignition interlocks are a key component of MADD's Campaign to Eliminate Drunk Driving. If passed, this bill would allow for ignition interlock use by all convicted DUI offenders. MADD strongly supports ignition interlock devices because statistics have shown that as many as 50-70 percent of DUI offenders continue to drive while their drivers' licenses are either suspended or revoked.

Ignition interlocks use fuel cell technology to measure a person's blood alcohol concentration. The devices contain a black box of data which registers the BAC an offender blows into the device each time he starts his vehicle's ignition. A vehicle will not start if the driver registers an impaired blood alcohol concentration level. Interlocks allow society to better hold DUI offenders accountable for their actions and simultaneously ensure that they not be placed in a situation which renders further harm to innocent parties.

New Mexico's mandatory interlock law has been on the books since 2005. With the law's implementation, New Mexico, which at one time had the greatest number of DUI traffic fatalities per capita of any state, has experienced a 20 percent reduction in drunk driving deaths. Additionally, studies conducted in New Mexico estimate a decline in DUI recidivism that ranges from 50-90 percent.

MADD suggests strengthening current IID in the following ways:

- Mandate that all persons convicted of DUI acquire a restricted driver's license that conditions their driving on use of ignition interlocks. Require a 30- day hard DL suspension and 1 year mandatory IID.
- Require a 45-day hard DL suspension on 3rd DUI conviction and mandate 3 year IID use.
- Create an IID Fund and Indigent Interlock Fund by collecting a minimum administrative fee from all DUI offenders. Indigent status should not be a reason for not using interlocks.

Studies have shown that use of interlocks for a period of at least five months reduces the likelihood a drunk driver will drive impaired again. In 2006, the Department of Justice reports that Connecticut had 5,105 DUI arrests. The National Traffic and Highway Safety Administration reported drunk driver involvement in 36.2 percent of Connecticut's 2006 traffic fatalities. Drunk drivers are taking lives. Each year, drunk drivers, with a BAC at or above .08, claim more than 15,000 lives. Studies by federal agencies and independent think tanks highlight the high rate of recidivism associated with drunk driving. The typical person convicted of his or her first DUI offense has driven drunk as 87 times before being caught. We know that one third of persons convicted of DUI will be convicted of DUI yet again. Interlocks have been shown to deter drinking and driving in both a specific and general sense. DUI offenders using interlocks have acknowledged the device's change in their behaviors; we should too.

In addition to reducing the incidence of drinking and driving and thus saving lives, widespread use of ignition interlocks will save Connecticut money. The costs of interlocks are borne by the offenders. Offenders pay about the price of a drink per day to keep an interlock device on their vehicle. Offenders will be expected to pay about \$150-\$175 in installation fees and a monthly fee of about \$75. This sanction allows offenders to continue providing for their families. Interlocks keep states from having to use scarce public revenue to incarcerate DUI offenders. Connecticut needs to join the numerous other states that are making ignition interlock devices mandatory for all DUI offenders.

I look forward to answering any questions you may have. I thank you for inviting me to appear before your committee.